

***The Institution of Engineers, Australia; Sydney Division
Engineering Heritage Committee***

Oral History Program: Biographical Notes

**Thomas Ian McCREERY (1925 -)
Civil Engineer**

Birth and Family: Born in 1925 at South Perth, WA. Parents were very early settlers in Bunbury, WA. Father was a bank manager with the Commonwealth Bank. Lost his job in the Great Depression, which resulted in parents' marriage break up. Had one brother.

Education: Attended North Perth State School and was a choirboy in the Church of England. Received a scholarship to finish his secondary education at Wesley College. Combined the last two years into one and received a Distinction in Chemistry and Mathematics.

1941 - Correspondence course in Civil engineering.

1943 - Civil Engineering at University of WA, on Commonwealth Scholarship.

Qualifications: 1947 - Bachelor in Civil Engineering (Honours)

Memberships: Secretary Engineers Club and Guild Councillor (at University)

Institute of Arbitrators Australia; National Council, 1986 - 1995

Institution of Engineers Australia, Member Standing Committee

on Arbitration, 1982 - ; Australian Federation of Construction Contractors, National President 1968.

Department of Overseas Trade, Member of Construction Industry Overseas Survey Mission, 1971

Australian Overseas Construction Council, Member 1971 - 1980

Awards:

Work History: End of 1940 first job as an office boy with the Victoria Insurance Company. In 1941 he applied successfully to the West Australian Government Railways (WAGR) for position as a Civil Engineering Cadet - his interest in Engineering was purely accidental. Began in Design Office in Perth, and in 1942 move to Northam District Office.

From 1943, attended University of WA full time on a (then new) Commonwealth Scholarship, continuing to work for the WAGR during the University holidays.

After graduating in 1947, he went to Brunei on a two year contract with the Shell Oil company, working on reconstruction of war-damaged oilfield facilities, mainly roads and oil tanks. Was accompanied by his fiancée, Jill, and married in Miri, Sarawak.

On expiry of his contract in 1949, he returned to Australia and obtained a job with the State Electricity Commission of Victoria (SECV) as manager of the Newport Power Station site, extending the turbine house and

overseeing the construction of a new coal-loading facility. Transferred to Kiewa Hydroelectric Scheme, he became second in charge of construction of the Rocky Valley Dam, a large earth-filled dam project after which he returned to SECV's Melbourne Head Office.

Unhappy with the type of work he was doing, he accepted a job offer with John Holland Constructions, then a small building company.

In 1954 he was Manager of Construction of coal-fired power station for Australian Paper Mills (APM) at Fairfield, Melbourne.

1959 became Branch Manager, Victoria - tendering, construction and financial management.

1957 became Construction Manager, Victoria for John Holland Constructions. Was involved with the construction of the West Gate Bridge. Some time before its partial collapse, he developed concerns about the soundness of the design, which led to John Holland seeking and obtaining from the designers, documented certification of the adequacy of the design.

Was sent on a study tour Europe, U.S.A. and Japan for three months, studying new construction methods, before becoming Branch Manager, New South Wales in 1960 – a new branch he established. Some of the early construction projects in Sydney were the Silverwater and Roseville Bridges.

1963 became member of the board of John Holland Constructions.

Success of NSW Branch led to its expanding into Western Australia, Queensland and Northern Territory. In 1964 he became General Manager of the Northern Region of John Holland Constructions, which included N.S.W., Queensland, Northern Territory, and Western Australia.

In 1969 Assistant Managing Director - responsible for all Group operations.

In 1972 was made Managing Director, International with responsibility to expand into South East Asia and the Pacific Basin and was made a board member. Retired as an executive in 1980 but remained on board of John Holland Constructions until 1990.

In 1980 changed careers and went into Arbitration and Mediation which lasted until 1997.

Since then he has served as a director on the Boards of several public and private companies. Acted as arbitrator, mediator or appraiser in many disputes between parties in relation to engineering or building contracts.

He and his wife belong to Avondale Golf Club in Sydney.

Prepared by Freda Garnsey, July 2002, from interviews conducted on 13 April 1999